UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2000/NGO/73
10 February 2000

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-sixth session
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Written statement* submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 December 1999]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization.

War crimes in Chechnya

1. The great Powers endorse the implosion of States when they prove troublesome and crush peoples whose wish to affirm their identity becomes a threat to great-Power strength. The Western Powers have contributed to the break-up of Yugoslavia and the dismantling of Serbia in the name of the rights of the people of Kosovo. The Government of the Russian Federation, taking advantage of the de facto inertia of the United States, is crushing Chechen national aspirations in the name of the unity of the Russian Federation.

2. In both cases, the great Powers are using armed force to deal with their own domestic problems. It is the custom of the President of the United States to manipulate public opinion through international operations in order to bolster his authority. The Government of the Russian Federation, taking its cue from the American "model", is strengthening its prestige by pandering to Russian chauvinism, prompted by electoral necessity. Small peoples pay the price of this posturing.

3. The great Powers have adopted the same "model" of war. The war waged by the Western armies in Kosovo was based on the idea of "zero casualties". The aim is to reduce the risks to oneself by remote strikes against an enemy who cannot hit back: the Iraqi and Serbian peoples have thus been attacked by Western armed forces which have sustained no casualties. The Chechen people has been attacked by Russian armed forces using the same methods.

4. This strategy neutralizes domestic opinion in the great Powers (the principal danger being rebellion), but provokes massive destruction and heavy civilian casualties in bombed areas. The bombing of Iraqi cities is continuing. The same treatment was subsequently meted out to Belgrade and Grozny. Targets with major economic and social significance have been destroyed, setting back the level of development by decades. Humanitarian law has been consistently violated, paradoxically in the name of protecting human rights (invoked by the United States and its allies in Kosovo) or fighting terrorism (invoked by the Russian Federation in Chechnya).

5. The Commission on Human Rights should take account of this new approach to warfare ("zero deaths"), which is inevitably responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined in the Statute of the International Criminal Court. It should also condemn the abuse of humanitarian rhetoric which discredits the very concept of human rights, hijacked by the great Powers to serve their interests. A resolution condemning these practices, which have led to tens of millions of civilian deaths, is indispensable if resolutions generally dealing with lesser problems are to be taken seriously.